



# Beautiful on the inside

Kees Spanjers, President of the European Council of Interior Architects

The New Church in the Hague, the Netherlands.  
The idea was the transformation of a historical church building (1648) into a chamber music hall (1997)

Design: Kees Spanjers, BV Zaanen Spanjers cs Architecten BNA|BNI  
Photo: Kostas Pasantis



## Kees Spanjers

Kees Spanjers is the president of the European Council of Interior Architects, the umbrella organization of 14 national professional organizations of interior architects, representing over 7500 associated interior architects. He is also a co-opted board member of the International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers, the global body of the interior design professions, representing 52 member associations in 45 countries worldwide.

Kees Spanjers is a registered architect and interior-architect and lives and works in Amsterdam and New York City. His firm Zaanen Spanjers cs Architecten BNA|BNI specializes in cultural buildings and public interiors. Projects include the internationally acclaimed glass music hall (1991) in the Beurs van Berlage building in Amsterdam.

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From shards of glass medieval artists shaped magnificent windows that bathed the interiors of cathedrals in ravishing light. Clearly the architecture was overwhelming, both outside and in, a culmination of artful craftsmanship that touched all the senses; there was the silent whispering of prayers, the smell of burning incense and candles, the warm touch of beautifully carved furniture, due proportion and harmony in all components, but above all there was the light, dimly filtered through symbolic or mythical allusion. Clarity and splendor all set to overwhelm the faithful in diligent devotion.

Centuries later Louis Comfort Tiffany, son of a jeweler, developed the technique of stained glass to perfection and with the help of recently invented electric lighting brought the atmosphere of warm light into the comfort of the home. Was it coincidental that his middle name was Comfort? It was surely no coincidence that Tiffany's glass designs were inspired by the upcoming Arts and Crafts movement, which marked the earliest stages of interior architecture and design.

Interior architecture is the discipline that engages in the design of our living environment. Next to the practical translation of users demand, it particularly involves the perception of space to the user. Even more than architecture, interior architecture focuses on the direct relation between user and the interior space. Quality of use and perception are of equal value to the design. Interior Architecture specifies functions of use and adapts them to suit human need and functioning, in a way that serves human affections and perception. In that respect, it is important to remember that throughout its life, a building has many users, and thus the building will constantly be subject to changing views.

Designing space means making a selection of materials, colors, furniture, lighting, et cetera. However, the less tangible and visible qualities of an interior, such as a logical and functional routing and layout and practical demands for maintenance are at least as important. Nevertheless, the most important issue is: how does being in that interior make you feel? What does an individual experience when entering that space? How does the client want that person to feel? Should the occupant feel at ease? Be impressed? Or should he/she rather feel much appreciated? It's in this particular area that the added value of interior architects lies. They distance themselves from every other discipline

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by placing themselves in the position of the person who eventually will occupy that space. Taking into consideration whether the occupant is a resident, visitor, employee or (potential) customer.

The creative contribution of a designer can, beside all practical, physical and psychological influences, affect the quality of use and/or the perception of a space considerably. Unconventional solutions, new materials and techniques, innovative or artistic impact, allows us to experience a space that is both inspiring and special. Interior architects are designers who are always in pursuit of renewal and improvement. With ingenuity and creativity they develop new ideas and search for different solutions. Due to their special powers of imagination they are capable of making surprising propositions, without losing track of the primary function of a particular space. Designing is an exact activity, which requires

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creativity as well as courage and seductive persuasiveness. It unites nimble creative ability with technical knowledge and understanding. Sometimes this requires empathy from clients, but eventually it provides the surplus value that makes the use and experience of a space into a reciprocal advantage. And isn't that what it is all about?

We are all users of buildings. It may be our home, our working environment, or a public interior. Design and furnishing of the interior receives a lot of interest nowadays. Our concern for good quality of life is reflected in the attention paid directly to our living environment. Interior architecture has an innovative and inspiring influence on work and communication processes and can make a valuable contribution to the adaptability of buildings in time and to the sustainability of the built environment. Our focus on health, safety and well-being and the care for environmental aspects make the design of interiors more and more the work of specialists. Interior architects are such specialists.

Today, the use of glass in interior architecture has expanded enormously. It is not just one of the materials that inspire designers; it might very well be the most versatile of them all. This magazine, Intelligent Glass Solutions will give you a fine overview of creative solutions and endless possibilities of the material that has fostered imagination for centuries. Glass is famous for its transparency, though today it comes in many shapes and finishes that benefit designers to apply it for many different purposes; colored, tinted, translucent, frosted, mirrored, etched, sand-blasted, silk-screened, enameled and so on. Glass takes up many functions; it can be a divider, a container, a supporter, a finish or a decoration. Glass can be part of a hybrid construction, but more and more we acknowledge the structural qualities of the material and use it as an autonomous material. It can be tempered, laminated, combined with wiring, tinfoil, liquid crystal and many more. Glass is a lasting material, yet it is fully recyclable. That makes it an excellent sustainable material. Glass is a semi finished product, applicable and adaptable to almost all designers wishes. The possibilities are exciting and endless.

Yet, in the end there is one quality of the material that I think is highly underestimated and in which lays its true fragile beauty.

Glass is breakable - As life itself.